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Baltimore and Ohio Railroad: Martinsburg  
Repair Shops  
West side of Tuscarora Creek opposite  
east end of Race Street  
Martinsburg  
Berkeley County  
West Virginia

HAER No. WV-1

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D. C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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BALTIMORE AND OHIO RAILROAD: MARTINSBURG REPAIR SHOPS

HAER No. WV-1

Location: West side of Tuscarora Creek opposite east end of Race Street  
Martinsburg, Berkeley County, West Virginia

UTM: 18.245290.4371690  
Quad: Martinsburg

Dates of Construction: 1849, 1866 and later

Builder/Designer: Baltimore and Ohio Railroad

Original Owner: Baltimore and Ohio Railroad

Present Owner: Baltimore and Ohio Railroad  
P.O. Box 6419  
Terminal Tower  
Cleveland, Ohio 44101

Original Use: Served as main depot, locomotive repair and machine shops for the railroad

Present Use: Manufactures frogs and switches

Significance: Since the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company felt that the facilities at Sandy Hook, Maryland, were inadequate, in 1849, \$35,000 was spent for construction of various structures at Martinsburg to replace Sandy Hook. Besides the central engine station, a brick engine house with a turntable in front and 11 stalls for locomotives, a brick engine shop with a smithy and stationary engine shed attached, and two coal sheds with depositories for wood, were built at this time. In 1852, large expenditures were deemed necessary for the acquisition of additional grounds to construct shops which the company required for its "prospective wants." In 1856, \$11,555.69 was spent to widen the depot grounds and to construct the foundation for a new engine house. However, the Civil War interrupted plans to improve the facilities at Martinsburg.

The city of Martinsburg was in a key location and strategically important to the armies of both the North and South. Since it served as one of the main depots for the B & O, it became the target for severe destruction by the Confederates in an attempt to cut off an important artery of Federal supply and

communication. Federal forces occupied Martinsburg to keep Southern forces from the Shenandoah Valley. They also had to deal with citizens who sympathized with the South. In 1861, Confederate troops removed all stationary machinery, tools and materials, and the following year, it was necessary to replace a 50-foot turntable which the troops carried off. The greatest destruction occurred on October 19-20, 1862, and included the polygonal engine house, a half-roundhouse, large machine shops, a warehouse, ticket and telegraph offices, the company hotel and dining house, coal bins, sandhouses, a blacksmith shop, master mechanic house, tool houses, and the pumping engine for a water station.

Large-scale reconstruction at Martinsburg began in 1866: a polygonal engine house built of brick for 16 engines, a machine shop 60 feet by 184 feet, similar to the shop at Mt. Clare, and a large brick car shop with a slate roof, 110 by 200 feet, were all near completion. The same year, the Kroeson Hotel property was purchased and extensive additions made including a large stone warehouse fitted with a telegraph office. Two large brick sand houses, a brick oil house, and the foundation of the second roundhouse were built in 1870. The new engine house, when completed two years later (1872), was similar to the first, 170 feet in diameter with pits for 16 engines.

Few groups of buildings like the B & O's Martinsburg shops have survived for over one hundred years in this country. Survival in this case is due to preservation by default, which means the structures have served some useful purpose to the railroad since the time of their construction.

The B & O Railroad was at the forefront in the field of railroad engineering. Its inventions in bridging systems and mechanical devices were quickly recognized not only by her sister railroads in this country, but also in Europe. The type of structure these functions generated were unique. The roundhouse was developed for the steam engine, its shape derived from the centrally located "round table" which acted as a rotating hub delivering any number of locomotives into the work bays, radiating from the hub like spokes on a wheel. Also of note is the large overhead volume, shaped to funnel the smoke and engine gases away from the work area at floor level like one gigantic

chimney. As for the bridge and the frog and switch shops, the means were the same. Here was needed uninterrupted floor space to allow the ease of handling fifty foot sections of bridge trussing or rail sections and a space tall enough to accommodate large overhead cranes and heavy duty industrial machinery. By understanding the functions, one can appreciate the structures designed to support these tremendous volumes, especially when it is realized that they were constructed during a time when buildings of this type had no precedent and the engineering techniques of iron structures had just recently been implemented. The buildings should be evaluated not only individually but also as a group, for they represent significant examples of four different functions and four different solutions combined by common scale and color into a unique facility for the service of the railroad.

Transmitted by:

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B & O Railroad Survey